Quality of Life, Nutrition, and Respiratory Health in Older Adults

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Abstract: Whether aging in a healthy manner or experiencing disease, all older adults (65+years) are at risk for swallowing difficulties (dysphagia) and thus disrupted hydration, nutrition, and lung function. Such disruptions can have a profound and adverse effect on health and quality of life (QOL). This study sought to compare perceptual and objective measures of QOL, nutrition, and respiratory status in 10 healthy older residents of a continuing care community. Each participant completed a series of self-report questionnaires (Short Form-36 Health Survey; Hearing Handicap Inventory; Reflux Symptom Index; Nutrition QOL Survey; and Swallowing QOL Survey). The following objective measures were obtained: Body Mass Index (BMI; including height and weight); blood pressure; mid-arm muscle circumference (to estimate body fat); bioelectrical impedance (to estimate hydration); tongue strength and endurance; vital (breathing) capacity; pulse oximetry (blood oxygen level); and swallowing function. Statistical analysis is underway and will be completed by the end of March. This work is part of a larger study to investigate perceptual and objective measures of QOL, nutrition, and respiratory status in healthy older adults and those who have swallowing problems. This research will improve our current understanding about typical swallowing, nutrition, and respiratory status in older adults, how nutrition and respiration change when swallowing function declines, and how QOL is affected.

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